

Remarks at a National Day of Prayer Reception
May 3, 2001

Thank you, all. Thank you and welcome to the White House. It's great to see members of my Cabinet here. Secretaries Veneman, Martinez, and Paige, thank you all for coming. Leaders of the United States Congress, thank you all for being here, as well.

Shirley, thank you for the State proclamations. I quickly thumbed through to make sure that Florida was there. [*Laughter*] Otherwise, my little brother might be hearing from me. [*Laughter*] But it was there. And thanks for the beautiful painting. We know how much work it takes to organize the National Day of Prayer, and all of us thank you for your hard work. You've done a very good job.

Wintley, thank you very much for sharing your voice with us. This is the second time I've been privileged to hear your voice since I've been the President. I hope to hear it a lot more. And Angela, it's wonderful to see you again. Thank you for your testimony and your beauty and your grace.

And Reverend Rogers, thank you so much for bringing not only your own words of prayer but that of our mutual friend Billy Graham, for whom we continue to pray for his health.

This is a day when our Nation recognizes a power above our power and influence beyond our influence, a guiding wisdom far greater than our own. The American character, it's strong and confident, but we have never been reluctant to speak of our own dependence on providence.

Our country was founded by great and wise people who were fluent in the language of humility, praise, and petition. Throughout our history, in danger and division, we have always turned to prayer. And our country has been delivered from many serious evils and wrongs because of that prayer.

We cannot presume to know every design of our Creator, or to assert a special claim on His favor. Yet, it is important to pause and recognize our help in ages past and our hope for years to come.

The first President to live in the White House arrived with a prayer. In a letter to his wife written on his second night here, John Adams offered a prayer that Heaven might bless this house and all those who would call it home. One of his successors, Franklin D. Roosevelt, thought enough of that prayer to have it inscribed on a mantelpiece in the State Dining Room, where you can still find it today.

In this house I make many decisions. But as I do so, as I make those decisions, I know as surely as you said that many Americans lift me up in prayer, those prayers are a gracious gift, and Laura and I and my family greatly appreciate them.

America has many traditions of faith and many experiences of prayer. But I suspect that many who pray have something in common: that we may pray for God's help, but as we do so, we find that God has changed our deepest selves. We learn humility before His will and acceptance of things beyond our understanding. We discover that the most sincere of all prayers can be the simple words, "Thy will be done." And that is a comfort more powerful than all our plans.

Laura and I really appreciate you being here on this special day. We thank you for your concerns for your country and your love of the Lord. It's an honor for me to be here, and I would ask that you join me in the State Dining Room for a little fellowship.

God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:48 p.m. on the State Floor at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Shirley Dobson,

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chair, National Day of Prayer Task Force; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; gospel singer Wintley Phipps; Angela Perez Baraquio, Miss America; Rev. Adrian Rogers, pastor, Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN; and

evangelist Rev. Billy Graham. The National Day of Prayer proclamation of April 27 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks to the American Jewish Committee May 3, 2001

Well, Bruce, thank you very much for that kind invitation. I'm glad I came, and I'm proud to call you friend.

I appreciate, David Harris, your eloquence. I want to say welcome to the foreign dignitaries who are here, Members of the Congress, Justice O'Connor, my friend Mayor Williams. And I'm proud to be here tonight with such close friends of America: *Mi amigo, un hombre muy fuerte, muy inteligente, el Presidente de Mexico*, Vicente Fox; Foreign Minister Fischer; and Foreign Minister Peres.

I had the honor of meeting with Foreign Minister Peres today in the Oval Office. It is not the first time we have met. He had a sparkle in his eye some 12 years ago when we met; he still has this marvelous sparkle in his eye. I love his optimism. As Bruce mentioned, he said, "When you talk to Shimon Peres, you feel like you're talking to a poet; you know you're talking to a leader." He's been a good friend of the United States throughout his many years of public service, and I look forward to showing him my friendship for the state of Israel over the coming years.

And Mr. Fischer, welcome to Washington. Please take back my best regards to your Chancellor; I had a great visit with him, as well, in the Oval Office.

And Mr. President, thank you for coming by. He also was in the Oval Office. I had a pretty busy day. *[Laughter]* This is the third time I've met with President Fox, and it's right that it be that way because relations with Mexico and the United States

are incredibly important for our future. We want our friend to the south to be strong and vibrant. A strong Mexico, a healthy Mexico is good for the United States of America.

The four of us don't always agree; we occasionally have our differences. But one thing, obviously, we all agree on is when Bruce Ramer invites us somewhere, we go. *[Laughter]*

I took a look at this weekend's program before coming here. I was flattered to read that "understanding the new administration" is called a "central feature" of this year's meeting. Well, I may be able to save you some time. *[Laughter]*

I believe in equal opportunity for all without discrimination or prejudice of any kind. I believe that tolerance and respect must be taught to all our children because too many young minds and souls are lost to hate. I believe that our Government should support the works of charity that are motivated by faith, but our Government should never fund the teaching of faith itself.

I am a Christian, but I believe with the Psalmist that the Lord God of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. Understanding my administration should not be difficult. We will speak up for our principles. We will stand up for our friends in the world, and one of the most important friends is the state of Israel.

Incredibly enough, when I visited Israel 2 years ago, I had the honor of touring many parts of that land in a helicopter with